

# **Secretary Walker Announces Appointments of Directors for Divisions of Substance Abuse and Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Services**

NEW CASTLE (Jan. 10, 2018) – Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) Secretary Dr. Kara Walker announced two appointments of directors to lead the Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health and the Division of Developmental Disabilities Services.

Elizabeth Romero, who formerly served as Senior Director for Health Improvement with the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) in Arlington, Va., was appointed to lead the Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health (DSAMH). Romero, who lives in Middletown, started in her new position on Nov. 27.

“With more than 15 years as a public health professional, Elizabeth brings critical skills and talents to DSAMH that will help us continue to respond to the opioid epidemic and to build on our strong network of community-based mental health services,” Secretary Walker said. “She also has an extraordinary sense of compassion for Delawareans in need of our services.”

During her time at the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials, Romero’s duties and accomplishments include oversight of behavioral health, injury, and substance abuse and chronic disease health teams with a focus on building systems of care to improve population and community outcomes.

She also provided capacity-building assistance to more than 49 state and territorial health departments and national partners to support policies and evidence-based practices for substance abuse prevention.

In previous positions, Romero worked for Nemours Health and Prevention Services in Newark, the National Association for State Boards of Education, AED/FHI 360, and the Harvard Prevention Research Center at the Harvard School of Public Health. She has a bachelor's of science degree from Boston University and a master's of science degree from the University of Oregon.

Secretary Walker also announced the appointment of Damaris Piliro, who most recently served as Chief Operating Officer of SERV Behavioral Health, which has overall responsibility for intellectual and developmental disabilities division services for all counties in New Jersey, as the new Director of the Division of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDDS). Piliro will begin her new duties Jan. 29.

"With more than 20 years of progressive operations and leadership experience, Damaris has spent most of her career working in support of people with developmental disabilities," Secretary Walker said. "That is the kind of hands-on leadership she will bring to serving Delawareans with developmental disabilities and their families, and working with providers, advocates and community partners."

At SERV Behavioral Health, Piliro led and directed a division with a \$30 million annual budget that serves adults and children with intellectual and developmental disabilities across New Jersey in group homes, day habilitation programs, through in-home supports and in adult foster care. Besides her experience at SERV Behavioral Health, Piliro also served for two years as Chief Operating Officer of Generations Home Care in New Castle, where she was in charge of the organization's overall planning, development, administration and evaluation.

Previously, she worked in various director roles at Loving Care Agency, New Jersey Mentor, Bayada Nurses and the Brain Injury Program at Beechwood-New Jersey.

Piliro has a master's of business administration in health care management from the University of Phoenix's Philadelphia Campus and a bachelor of arts from Rutgers University in psychology.

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The Department of Health and Social Services is committed to improving the quality of life of Delaware's citizens by promoting health and well-being, fostering self-sufficiency, and protecting vulnerable populations.